

Commercial Hotel and Coffee House
(Now Grand Hotel)
Nørre Gade 44-45
Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-8

HABS
VI,
3-CHAM,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. VI-8

COMMERCIAL HOTEL AND COFFEE HOUSE
(NOW THE GRAND HOTEL)HABS
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Location: Nørre Gade 44-45, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Present Owner: Undivided 1/2 interest - A. H. Lockhart and Co. Undivided 1/2 interest shared equally by Oliver Kirketerp, Mrs. Inez Pedersen, Mrs. Beulah K. Lanclos.

Present Use: Hotel and restaurant on upper floor, various shops on ground floor.

Statement of Significance: This is a large, prominent commercial building in the heart of Charlotte Amalie; it was built in the mid-nineteenth century and is in continuous use as a hotel.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

Original owner - Pierre Bonnelly. Bonnelly bought lot 44 on 16 March 1835 and lot 45 on 15 April 1835, both vacant at the time.

On 13 February 1843 the heirs of Pierre Bonnelly deeded the property, now with the hotel, to Jean Baptiste Anduze. On 1 July 1895 the property passed to: Paul Anduze an undivided 3/4 interest, and to Calixte Anduze an undivided 1/4 interest.

On 29 June 1914 the property was deeded to A. H. Lockhart, and has stayed in the Lockhart family since. In 1936 when A. H. Lockhart's estate was settled the property passed to A. H. Lockhart and Co. On 18 October 1951 an undivided 1/2 interest was deeded to Violet C. Kirketerp. On 7 July 1964 her 1/2 interest passed to Oliver Kirketerp, Mrs. Inez Pedersen, and Mrs. Beulah K. Lanclos.

2. Date of erection: 1839-40. The hotel opened on Thursday, 14 May 1840.

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3. Original plans, construction etc.: The Hingelberg Map of Charlotte Amalie for this area is dated March 1837, and shows these lots vacant. (Photocopies at the St. Thomas Public Library and the Virgin Islands National Park Headquarters, St. Thomas.)

The St. Thomas building tax Matricula (roll or register) for 1839 shows Bonnelly as owner of these two lots, made no building assessment, but carried a note, "building under construction."

The Matricula for 1840 noted that the building was in use for only 2/3 of the year and adjusted the assessment accordingly to 3498 square alen, tax 109 rigsdaler 30 skilling. (One alen equals about two feet or 0.627 meters. One rigsdaler equals 96 skilling, and was approximately equal to one pesos or piece-of-eight, with which the American dollar was equated.)

The Matricula for 1841 shows Bonnelly assessed for the full area of the building - 5346 square alen, tax 167 rigsdaler 6 skilling.

The following notice, in French and Spanish as well as English, appeared in the Sanct Thomae Tidende for 13 May 1840:

"Mr. P. BONNELLY, has the honour of announcing to his friends and the public in general that his new establishment to be denominated Commercial Hotel & Coffee House will be opened on THURSDAY 14th Inst.

"He hopes that by strict attention to the various branches connected with said establishment to merit the patronage of his friends and the public in general."

The following description of the new building appeared in the Sanct Thomae Tidende for 6 May 1840:

May 6, 1840 - p.2, c. 2.

"THE COMMERCIAL HOTEL & COFFEE HOUSE

"This Edifice is now completed and open for the reception, and accommodation of foreign and

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domestic visitors.

"The building covers a spot of ground measuring from east to west 125 feet, and its greatest breadth from north to south 70 feet--forming a sloping parallelogram, according to the run of the Lot.

"The mansion comprises Two lofty Stories exclusive of a ground floor, or low stairs--divided in the following manner:--

- 1, The right wing contain the Proprietors residence together with a spacious airy Kitchen--planned and finished in the french european coustume, with a re-servoir of rain water for its use introduced by a pump. The Kitchen furniture are numerous, and of the best materials, and arranged conveniently.
- 2, The left wing comprises several large airy Stores, or Magasines for various purposes.
- 4, The entrance to this edifice is by THREE GATES: viz:
 - a, from Queen Street,
 - b, from the Kings Wharf--and
 - c, from the centre of the west wing dividing the Stores in equal number.These 3 entrances terminates in a neat paved court--from whence the Kitchen is entered, and the stairs ascended that leads to the first floor, or story;--when the steps are conquered the ascendant faces Two Parlours--one acting as assistant room to the Saloon--and the other to the billiard Hall; these Parlours are neat, and appropriately decorated with Paintings, and suitable furnitures.

"The Saloon measures 45 feet in length by 54 in breadth, and is tastefully arranged with decorations--and furnitures--which are neat--elegant--and of the latest fashion.

"The billiard Hall is a splendid square room measuring 45 feet, and containing 4 billiard-tables lighted by modern lamps,

and decorated with Paintings--and furnished so as to suit its purpose. In leaving this room, a third Parlour is encountered that conducts to the open Gallery which is long and spacious, and supported by pillars of the Corinthian Order, and guarded by iron railings, the floor is paved with marble fleeces, and from this gallery a desirable view is gained of the harbour-telegraph--and adjacent country:--a prospect not to be equalled on any of the Antilles.

"The first floor, or story of this splendid building impress at once a traveller with a just Idea of the Proprietors taste, and knowledge of constructing, and arranging a public Inn--and when he ascends the stair that conducts him to a room of repose --he must then justly acknowledge he has not met with many such structures of beauty and utility in his travels.

"The upper floor, or story--consist of a close gallery the length of the building, and 10 feet wide that leads the visitor to a choice chamber--of which there are 16 in number --8 of them fronting Queens Street with a pleasing view of the principal square of the Town--together with the hills covered with handsome houses; the remaining 8 chambers fronting the harbour--enjoying an equal view with that of the open gallery. These chambers are lofty--airy and of equal size, and furnished so as to suit one, or more persons.

"In closing the detail of this superb Mansion, it cannot be conjectured otherwise--than the Proprietor has expended a considerable sum of money in its completion--consequently the most enlivened encouragement ought to be tendered him from a generous public--particularly on the days of Festivity when the Saloon should be their choice--and no doubt in return their expectations gratified. A. Creol."

This building has been called the Grand Hotel only in the 20th century and its use can be confusing because the building a little farther up the hill to the

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north now called the Hotel 1829, originally the A. Lavalette House, was called the Grand Hotel for a time. Ober's Guide to the West Indies . . . in 1908 still referred to this building as the "Commercial" while he called the Hotel 1829 the "Grand".

4. Alterations: The original building was three stories high. The ground floor, originally as now, contained shops opening off the street. The next floor was the main floor of the hotel, called the first floor in the above description of 1840. The top story, called the upper floor in the description and where the guest rooms were located, has been removed sometime since 1896. It appears in a photograph: "Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, 1896, seen from the naval frigate 'Fyen' "(in the Handels og Søfartsmuseet Paa Kronborg, Helsingør, Denmark, #B280. Copy at Virgin Islands National Park Headquarters, St. Thomas). The 1896 photograph shows a high Mansard roof on the hotel, with a close row of gabled dormers with round headed windows.

B. Sources of Information:

Unpublished:

The Chain of Title is taken from the deed book, Kings Quarter No. 1, folios 60, 61, in the Registrar of Deeds Office, 18 Kongens Gade, St. Thomas.

Tax Records are in the U. S. National Archives, Washington, Virgin Islands Records, Records Group 55, St. Thomas and St. John Tax Commission, Matriculae (rolls or registers) for 1839, 1840, and 1841.

Published Sources:

Newspaper accounts are from the Sanct Thomæ Tidende (published in St. Thomas), for 6 May and 13 May 1840. Microfilm copy at the St. Thomas Public Library.

Ober, Frederick A., A Guide to the West Indies and Bermudas (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1908), p. 319.

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